

## SELECTED POEMS

# **SELECTED POEMS**

by  
**ROBERT BRIDGES**

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# I

## *From EROS AND PSYCHE*

*A narrative poem in twelve measures. The story done into  
English from the Latin of Apuleius*

### FOURTH QUARTER: WINTER

*December*

[Aphrodite, angry at Eros's love for Psyche, sets her impossible tasks to achieve. First Psyche is shown a heap of many different sorts of grain, and is told to separate kind from kind.]

#### 1

A single lamp there stood beside the heap,  
And shed thereon its mocking golden light;  
Such as might tempt the weary eye to sleep  
Rather than prick the nerve of taskèd sight.  
Yet Psyche, not to fail for lack of zeal,  
With good will sat her down to her ordeal,  
Sorting the larger seeds as best she might.

#### 2

When lo! upon the wall, a shadow past  
Of doubtful shape, across the chamber dim  
Moving with speed: and seeing nought that cast  
The shade, she bent her down the flame to trim;  
And there the beast itself, a little ant,  
Climb'd up in compass of the lustre scant,  
Upon the bowl of oil ran round the rim.



## 3

Smiling to see the creature of her fear  
 So dwarf'd by truth, she watcht him where he crept,  
 For mere distraction telling in his ear  
 What straits she then was in, and telling wept.  
 Whereat he stood and trim'd his horns; but ere  
 Her tale was done resumed his manner scare,  
 Ran down, and on his way in darkness kept.

## 4

But she intent drew forth with dextrous hand  
 The larger seeds, or push'd the smaller back,  
 Or light from heavy with her breathing fan'd.  
 When suddenly she saw the floor grow black,  
 And troops of ants, flowing in noiseless train,  
 Moved to the hill of seeds, as o'er a plain  
 Armies approach a city for attack;

## 5

And gathering on the grain, began to strive  
 With grappling horns: and each from out the heap  
 His burden drew, and all their motion live  
 Struggled and slid upon the surface steep.  
 And Psyche wonder'd, watching them, to find  
 The creatures separated kind from kind:  
 Till dazzled with the sight she fell asleep.

## 6

And when she woke 'twas with the morning sound  
 Of Aphrodite's anger at the door,  
 Whom high amaze stay'd backward, as she found

Her foe asleep with all her trouble o'er:  
And round the room beheld, in order due,  
The piles arranged distinct and sorted true,  
Grain with grain, seed with seed, and spore with spore.

7

She fiercely cried 'Thou shalt not thus escape;  
For to this marvel dar'st thou not pretend.  
There is but one that coud this order shape,  
Demeter,—but I knew her not thy friend.  
Therefore another trial will I set,  
In which she cannot aid thee nor abet,  
But thou thyself must bring it fair to end.'

8

Thereon she sped her to the bounds of Thrace,  
And set her by a river deep and wide,  
And said 'To east beyond this stream, a race  
Of golden-fleecèd sheep at pasture bide.  
Go seek them out; and this thy task, to pull  
But one lock for me of their precious wool,  
And give it in my hands at eventide:

9

'This do and thou shalt have thy heart's desire.'  
Which said, she fled and left her by the stream:  
And Psyche then, with courage still entire,  
Had plunged therein; but now of great esteem  
Her life she rated, while it lent a spell  
Wherein she yet might hope to quit her well,  
And in one winning all her woes redeem.

## 10

There as she stood in doubt, a fluting voice  
 Rose from the flood, 'Psyche, be not afraid  
 To hear a reed give tongue, for 'twas of choice  
 That I from mortal flesh a plant was made.  
 My name is Syrinx; once from mighty Pan  
 Into the drowning river as I ran,  
 A fearful prayer my steps for ever stay'd.

## 11

'But by that change in many climes I live;  
 And Pan, my lover, who to me alone  
 Is true and does me honour, I forgive—  
 Nor if I speak in sorrow is't my own:  
 Rather for thee my voice I now uplift  
 To warn thee plunge not in the river swift,  
 Nor seek the golden sheep to men unknown.

## 12

'If thou should cross the stream, which may not be,  
 Thou couldst not climb upon the hanging rocks,  
 Nor ever, as the goddess bade thee, see  
 The pasture of the yellow-fleeced flocks:  
 Or if thou could, their herded horns would gore  
 And slay thee on the crags, or thrust thee o'er  
 Ere thou couldst rob them of their golden locks.

## 13

'The goddess means thy death. But I can show  
 How thy obedience yet may thwart her will.  
 At noon the golden flocks descend below,

Leaving the scented herbage of the hill,  
And where the shelving banks to shallows fall,  
Drink at the rippling water one and all,  
Nor back return till they have drawn their fill.

14

‘I will command a thornbush, that it stoop  
Over some ram that steppeth by in peace.  
And him in all its prickles firmly coop,  
Making thee seizure of his golden fleece;  
So without peril of his angry horns  
Shalt thou be quit: for he upon the thorns  
Must leave his ransom ere he win release.’

15

Then Psyche thank’t her for her kind befriending,  
And hid among the rushes looking east;  
And when noon came she saw the flock descending  
Out of the hills; and lo! one golden beast  
Caught in a thornbush; and the mighty brute  
Struggl’d and tore it from its twisted root  
Into the stream, or e’er he was releas’t.

16

And when they water’d were and gone, the breeze  
Floated the freighted thorn where Psyche lay:  
Whence she unhook’d the golden wool at ease,  
And back to heaven for passage swift gan pray.  
And Hermes, who was sent to be her guide  
Ifso she lived, came down at eventide,  
And bore her thither ere the close of day.

But when the goddess saw the locks of gold  
 Held to her hands, her heart with wrath o'erran:  
 'Most desperate thou, and by abetting bold,  
 That dost outwit me, prove thee as I can.  
 Ye this work is not thine: there is but one  
 Of all the gods who could the thing have done.  
 Hast thou a friend too in the lusty Pan?

'I'll give thee trial where he cannot aid.'  
 Which said, she led her to a torrid land,  
 Level and black, but not with flood or shade,  
 For nothing could the mighty heat withstand,  
 Which aye from morn till eve the naked sun  
 Pour'd on that plain, where never foot had run,  
 Nor any herb sprung on its molten sand.

Far off a gloomy mountain rose alone:  
 And Aphrodite, thither pointing, said  
 'There lies thy task. Out of the topmost stone  
 Of yonder hill upwells a fountain head  
 Take thou this goblet; brimming must thou bring  
 Its cup with water from that sacred spring,  
 If ever to my son thou wouldst be wed.'

Saying, she gave into her hands a bowl  
 Cut of one crystal, open, broad and fair;  
 And bade her at all hazard keep it whole,

For heaven held nought beside so fine or rare.  
Then was she gone; and Psyche on the plain  
Now doubted if she ever should regain  
The love of Eros, strove she howsoe'er.

21

Yet as a helmsman, at the word to tack,  
Swiftly without a thought puts down his helm,  
So Psyche turn'd to tread that desert black,  
Since was no fear that could her heart o'erwhelm;  
Nor knew she that she went the fount to seek  
Of cold Cocytus, springing to the peak,  
Secretly from his source in Pluto's realm.

22

All night and day she journey'd, and at last  
Come to the rock gazed up in vain around:  
Nothing she saw but precipices vast  
O'er ruined scarps, with rugged ridges crown'd:  
And creeping to a cleft to rest in shade,  
Or e'er the desperate venture she assay'd,  
She fell asleep upon the stony ground.

23

A dream came to her, thus: she stood alone  
Within her palace in the high ravine;  
Where nought but she was changed, but she to stone.  
Worshippers throng'd the court, and still were seen  
Folk flying from the peak, who, ever more  
Flying and flying, lighted on the floor,  
*Hail!* cried they, *wife of Eros, adorèd queen!*

A hurtling of the battl'd air disturb'd  
 Her sunken sense, and waked her eyes to meet  
 The kingly bird of Zeus, himself that curb'd  
 His swooping course, alighting at her feet;  
 With motion gentle, his far-darting eye  
 In kindness dim'd upon her, he drew nigh,  
 And thus in words unveil'd her foe's deceit:

'In vain, poor Psyche, hast thou hither striven  
 Across the fiery plain toiling so well;  
 Cruelly to destruction art thou driven  
 By her, whose hate thou canst not quit nor quell.  
 No mortal foot may scale this horrid mount,  
 And those black waters of its topmost fount  
 Are guarded by the hornèd snakes of hell.

'Its little rill is an upleaping jet  
 Of cold Cocytus, which for ever licks  
 Earth's base, and when with Acheron 'tis met,  
 Its waters with that other cannot mix,  
 Which holds the elemental air dissolved;  
 But with it in its ceaseless course revolved  
 Issues unmingl'd in the lake of Styx.

'The souls of murderers, in guise of fish,  
 Scream as they swim therein and wail for cold,  
 Their times of woe determined by the wish

Of them they murder'd on the earth of old:  
Whom each five years they see, whene'er they make  
Their passage to the Acherusian lake,  
And there release may win from pains condoled.

28

'For if the pitying ear of them they slew  
Be haply piercèd by their voices spare,  
Then are they freed from pain; as are some few;  
But, for the most, again they forward fare  
To Tartarus obscene, and outcast thence  
Are hurried back into the cold intense,  
And with new company their torments share.

29

'Its biting lymph may not be touch'd of man  
Or god, unless the Fates have so ordain'd;  
Nor could I in thy favour break the ban,  
Nor pass the dragons that thereby are chain'd,  
Didst thou not bear the sacred cup of Zeus;  
Which, for thy peril lent, shall turn to use,  
And truly do the service which it feign'd.'

30

Thus as he spake, his talons made he ring  
Around the crystal bowl, and soaring high  
Descended as from heaven upon the spring:  
Nor dared the hornèd snakes of hell deny  
The minister of Zeus, that bore his cup,  
To fill it with their trusted water up,  
Thence to the King of heaven therewith to fly.



But he to Psyche bent his gracious speed,  
And bidding her to mount his feather'd back  
Bore her aloft as once young Ganymede;  
Nor ever made his steady flight to slack,  
Ere that he set her down beside her goal,  
And gave into her hands the crystal bowl  
Unspill'd, o'erbrimming with the water black.

## 2

### THREE SONNETS FROM THE GROWTH OF LOVE

#### 1

How could I quarrel or blame you, most dear,  
Who all thy virtues gavest and kept back none;  
Kindness and gentleness, truth without peer,  
And beauty that my fancy fed upon?

Now not my life's contrition for my fault  
Can blot that day, nor work me recompense,  
Tho' I might worthily thy worth exalt,  
Making thee long amends for short offence.

For surely nowhere, love, if not in thee  
Are grace and truth and beauty to be found;  
And all my praise of these can only be  
A praise of thee, howe'er by thee disown'd:

While still thou must be mine tho' far removed,  
And I for one offence no more beloved.

#### 2

Dreary was winter, wet with changeful sting  
Of clinging snowfall and fast-flying frost;  
And bitterer northwinds then withheld the spring,  
That dallied with her promise till 'twas lost.

A sunless and half-hearted summer drown'd  
The flowers in needful and unwelcom'd rain;  
And Autumn with a sad smile fled uncrown'd  
From fruitless orchards and unripen'd grain.

But could the skies of this most desolate year  
In its last month learn with our love to glow,  
Men yet should rank its cloudless atmosphere  
Above the sunsets of five years ago:

Of my great praise too part should be its own,  
Now reckon'd peerless for thy love alone.

3

Eternal Father, who didst all create,  
In whom we live, and to whose bosom move,  
To all men be Thy name known, which is Love,  
Till its loud praises sound at heaven's high gate.  
Perfect Thy kingdom in our passing state,  
That here on earth Thou may'st as well approve  
Our service, as Thou ownest theirs above,  
Whose joy we echo and in pain await.

Grant body and soul each day their daily bread:  
And should in spite of grace fresh woe begin,  
Even as our anger soon is past and dead  
Be Thy remembrance mortal of our sin:  
By Thee in paths of peace Thy sheep be led,  
And in the vale of terror comforted.

### 3

I heard a linnet courting  
His lady in the spring:  
His mates were idly sporting,  
Nor stayed to hear him sing  
His song of love.—  
I fear my speech distorting  
His tender love.

The phrases of his pleading  
Were full of young delight;  
And she that gave him heeding  
Interpreted aright  
His gay, sweet notes,—  
So sadly marred in the reading,—  
His tender notes.

And when he ceased, the hearer  
Awaited the refrain,  
Till swiftly perching nearer  
He sang his song again,  
His pretty song:—  
Would that my verse spake clearer  
His tender song!

Ye happy, airy creatures!  
That in the merry spring  
Think not of what misfeatures

Or cares the year may bring;  
But unto love  
Resign your simple natures  
To tender love.

I will not let thee go.  
 Ends all our month-long love in this?  
 Can it be summed up so,  
 Quit in a single kiss?  
 I will not let thee go.

I will not let thee go.  
 If thy words' breath could scare thy deeds,  
 As the soft south can blow  
 And toss the feathered seeds,  
 Then might I let thee go.

I will not let thee go.  
 Had not the great sun seen, I might;  
 Or were he reckoned slow  
 To bring the false to light,  
 Then might I let thee go.

I will not let thee go.  
 The stars that crowd the summer skies  
 Have watched us so below  
 With all their million eyes,  
 I dare not let thee go.

I will not let thee go.  
 Have we not chid the changeful moon,  
 Now rising late, and now

Because she set too soon,  
And shall I let thee go?

I will not let thee go.  
Have not the young flowers been content,  
Plucked ere their buds could blow,  
To seal our sacrament?  
I cannot let thee go.

I will not let thee go.  
I hold thee by too many bands:  
Thou sayest farewell, and lo!  
I have thee by the hands,  
And will not let thee go.

## 5

Who has not walked upon the shore,  
And who does not the morning know,  
The day the angry gale is o'er,  
The hour the wind has ceased to blow?

The horses of the strong south-west  
Are pastured round his tropic tent,  
Careless how long the ocean's breast  
Sob on and sigh for passion spent.

The frightened birds, that fled inland  
To house in rock and tower and tree,  
Are gathering on the peaceful strand,  
To tempt again the sunny sea;

Whereon the timid ships steal out  
And laugh to find their foe asleep,  
That lately scattered them about,  
And drave them to the fold like sheep.

The snow-white clouds he northward chased  
Break into phalanx, line, and band:  
All one way to the south they haste,  
The south, their pleasant fatherland.



From distant hills their shadows creep,  
Arrive in turn' and mount the lea,  
And flit across the downs, and leap  
Sheer off the cliff upon the sea;

And sail and sail far out of sight.  
But still I watch their fleecy trains,  
That piling all the south with light,  
Dapple in France the fertile plains.

# 6

## TRIOLET

When first we met we did not guess  
 That Love would prove so hard a master;  
 Of more than common friendliness  
 When first we met we did not guess.  
 Who could foretell this sore distress,  
 This irretrievable disaster  
 When first we met?—We did not guess  
 That Love would prove so hard a master.

## A PASSER-BY

Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,  
 Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,  
 That fearest nor sea rising, nor sky clouding,  
 Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?  
 Ah! soon, when Winter has all our vales opprest,  
 When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling,  
 Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or rest  
 In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails furling.

I there before thee, in the country that well thou  
 knowest,  
 Already arrived am inhaling the odorous air:  
 I watch thee enter unerringly where thou goest,  
 And anchor queen of the strange shipping there,  
 Thy sails for awnings spread, thy masts bare;  
 Nor is aught from the foaming reef to the snow-capped,  
 grandest  
 Peak, that is over the feathery palms more fair  
 Than thou, so upright, so stately, and still thou standest.

And yet, O splendid ship, unhailed and nameless,  
 I know not if, aiming a fancy, I rightly divine  
 That thou hast a purpose joyful, a courage blameless,  
 Thy port assured in a happier land than mine.

But for all I have given thee, beauty enough is thine  
As thou, aslant with trim tackle and shrouding,  
From the proud nostril curve of a prow's line  
In the offing scatterest foam, thy white sails crowding.



## LATE SPRING EVENING

I saw the Virgin-mother clad in green,  
Walking the sprinkled meadows at sundown;  
While yet the moon's cold flame was hung between  
The day and night, above the dusky town:  
I saw her brighter than the Western gold,  
Whereto she faced in splendour to behold.

Her dress was greener than the tenderest leaf  
That trembled in the sunset glare aglow:  
Herself more delicate than is the brief,  
Pink apple-blossom, that May showers lay low,  
And more delicious than's the earliest streak  
The blushing rose shows of her crimson cheek.

As if to match the sight that so did please,  
A music entered, making passion fain:  
Three nightingales sat singing in the trees,  
And praised the Goddess for the fallen rain;  
Which yet their unseen motions did arouse,  
Or parting Zephyrs shook out from the boughs.

And o'er the treetops, scattered in mid air,  
The exhausted clouds laden with crimson light  
Floated, or seemed to sleep; and, highest there,

One planet broke the lingering ranks of night;  
Daring day's company, so he might spy  
The Virgin-queen once with his watchful eye.

And when I saw her, then I worshipped her,  
And said,—O bounteous Spring, O beauteous Spring,  
Mother of all my years, thou who dost stir  
My heart to adore thee and my tongue to sing,  
Flower of my fruit, of my heart's blood the fire,  
Of all my satisfaction the desire!

How art thou every year more beautiful,  
Younger for all the winters thou hast cast:  
And I, for all my love grows, grow more dull,  
Decaying with each season overpast!  
In vain to teach him love must man employ thee,  
The more he learns the less he can enjoy thee.



There is a hill beside the silver Thames,  
Shady with birch and beech and odorous pine:  
And brilliant underfoot with thousand gems  
Steeply the thickets to his floods decline.

    Straight trees in every place  
    Their thick tops interlace,  
And pendant branches trail their foliage fine  
    Upon his watery face.

Swift from the sweltering pasturage he flows:  
His stream, alert to seek the pleasant shade,  
Pictures his gentle purpose, as he goes  
Straight to the caverned pool his toil has made.

    His winter floods lay bare  
    The stout roots in the air:  
His summer streams are cool, when they have played  
    Among their fibrous hair.

A rushy island guards the sacred bower,  
And hides it from the meadow, where in peace  
The lazy cows wrench many a scented flower,  
Robbing the golden market of the bees:

    And laden barges float  
    By banks of myosote;  
And scented flag and golden flower-de-lys  
    Delay the loitering boat.

And on this side the island, where the pool  
Eddies away, are tangled mass on mass  
The water-weeds, that net the fishes cool,  
And scarce allow a narrow stream to pass;  
    Where spreading crowfoot mars  
    The drowning nenuphars,  
Waving the tassels of her silken grass  
    Below her silver stars.

But in the purple pool there nothing grows,  
Not the white water-lily spoked with gold;  
Though best she loves the hollows, and well knows  
On quiet streams her broad shields to unfold:  
    Yet should her roots but try  
    Within these deeps to lie,  
Not her long reaching stalk could ever hold  
    Her waxen head so high.

Sometimes an angler comes, and drops his hook  
Within its hidden depths, and 'gainst a tree  
Leaning his rods, reads in some pleasant book,  
Forgetting soon his pride of fishery;  
    And dreams, or falls asleep,  
    While curious fishes peep  
About his nibbled bait, or scornfully  
    Dart off and rise and leap.

And sometimes a slow figure 'neath the trees,  
In ancient-fashioned smock, with tottering care



Upon a staff propping his weary knees,  
May by the pathway of the forest fare:  
    As from a buried day  
    Across the mind will stray  
Some perishing mute shadow,—and unaware  
    He passeth on his way.

Else, he that wishes solitude is safe,  
Whether he bathe at morning in the stream:  
Or lead his love there when the hot hours chafe  
The meadows, busy with a blurring steam;  
    Or watch, as fades the light,  
    The gibbous moon grow bright,  
Until her magic rays dance in a dream,  
    And glorify the night.

Where is this bower beside the silver Thames?  
O pool and flowery thickets, hear my vow!  
O trees of freshest foliage and straight stems,  
No sharer of my secret I allow:  
    Lest ere I come the while  
    Strange feet your shades defile;  
Or lest the burly oarsman turn his prow  
    Within your guardian isle.

## THE DOWNS

O bold majestic downs, smooth, fair and lonely;  
 O still solitude, only matched in the skies:  
     Perilous in steep places,  
     Soft in the level races,  
 Where sweeping in phantom silence the cloudland flies;  
 With lovely undulation of fall and rise;  
     Entrenched with thickets thorned,  
 By delicate miniature dainty flowers adorned!  
  
 I climb your crown, and lo! a sight surprising  
 Of sea in front uprising, steep and wide:  
     And scattered ships ascending  
     To heaven, lost in the blending  
 Of distant blues, where water and sky divide,  
 Urging their engines against wind and tide,  
     And all so small and slow  
 They seem to be wearily pointing the way they would go.  
  
 The accumulated murmur of soft plashing,  
 Of waves on rocks dashing and searching the sands,  
     Takes my ear, in the veering  
     Baffled wind, as rearing  
 Upright at the cliff, to the gullies and rifts he stands;  
 And his conquering surges scour out over the lands;  
     While again at the foot of the downs  
 He masses his strength to recover the topmost crowns.

## II

### LONDON SNOW

When men were all asleep the snow came flying,  
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,  
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,

Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;  
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;  
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:

Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;  
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,  
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.

All night it fell, and when full inches seven  
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,  
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;

And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness  
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare:  
The eye marvelled—marvelled at the dazzling white-  
ness;

The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air;  
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,  
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.

Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,  
They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze  
Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snowball-  
ing;

Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;  
Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,

‘O look at the trees!’ they cried, ‘O look at the trees!’

With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,  
Following along the white deserted way,  
A country company long dispersed asunder:

When now already the sun, in pale display  
Standing by Paul’s high dome, spread forth below  
His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.

For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;  
And trains of sombre men, past tale of number,  
Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they go:

But even for them awhile no cares encumber  
Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken,  
The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber  
At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the  
charm they have broken.

## 12

### ON A DEAD CHILD

Perfect little body, without fault or stain on thee,  
With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!  
Though cold and stark and bare,  
The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain on  
thee.

Thy mother's treasure wert thou;—alas! no longer  
To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be  
Thy father's pride;—ah, he  
Must gather his faith together, and his strength make  
stronger.

To me, as I move thee now in the last duty,  
Dost thou with a turn or gesture anon respond;  
Startling my fancy fond  
With a chance attitude of the head, a freak of beauty.

Thy hand clasps, as 'twas wont, my finger, and holds it:  
But the grasp is the clasp of Death, heartbreaking  
and stiff;  
Yet feels to my hand as if  
'Twas still thy will, thy pleasure and trust that enfolds  
it.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing,—  
Go lie thou there in thy coffin, thy last little bed!—  
Propping thy wise, sad head,  
Thy firm, pale hands across thy chest disposing.

So quiet! doth the change content thee?—Death,  
whither hath he taken thee?  
To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of this?  
The vision of which I miss,  
Who weep for the body, and wish but to warm thee and  
awaken thee?

Ah! little at best can all our hopes avail us  
To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,  
Unwilling, alone we embark,  
And the things we have seen and have known and have  
heard of, fail us.

## 13

### INDOLENCE

We left the city when the summer day  
Had verged already on its hot decline,  
And charmèd Indolence in languor lay  
In her gay gardens, 'neath her towers divine:  
'Farewell,' we said, 'dear city of youth and dream!'  
And in our boat we stepped and took the stream.

All through that idle afternoon we strayed  
Upon our proposed travel well begun,  
As loitering by the woodland's dreamy shade,  
Past shallow islets floating in the sun,  
Or searching down the banks for rarer flowers  
We lingered out the pleasurable hours.

Till when that loveliest came, which mowers home  
Turns from their longest labour, as we steered  
Along a straitened channel flecked with foam,  
We lost our landscape wide, and slowly neared  
An ancient bridge, that like a blind wall lay  
Low on its buried vaults to block the way.

Then soon the narrow tunnels broader showed,  
Where with its arches three it sucked the mass  
Of water, that in swirl thereunder flowed,

Or stood piled at the piers waiting to pass;  
And pulling for the middle span, we drew  
The tender blades aboard and floated through.

But past the bridge what change we found below!  
The stream, that all day long had laughed and played  
Betwixt the happy shires, ran dark and slow,  
And with its easy flood no murmur made:  
And weeds spread on its surface, and about  
The stagnant margin reared their stout heads out.

Upon the left high elms, with giant wood  
Skirting the water-meadows, interwove  
Their slumbrous crowns, o'ershadowing where they stood  
The floor and heavy pillars of the grove:  
And in the shade, through reeds and sedges dank,  
A footpath led along the moated bank.

Across, all down the right, an old brick wall,  
Above and o'er the channel, red did lean;  
Here buttressed up, and bulging there to fall,  
Tufted with grass and plants and lichen green;  
And crumbling to the flood, which at its base  
Slid gently nor disturbed its mirrored face.

Sheer on the wall the houses rose, their backs  
All windowless, neglected and awry,  
With tottering coigns, and crooked chimney stacks;



And here and there an unused door, set high  
Above the fragments of its mouldering stair,  
With rail and broken step led out on air.

Beyond, deserted wharfs and vacant sheds,  
With empty boats and barges moored along,  
And rafts half-sunken, fringed with weedy shreds,  
And sodden beams, once soaked to season strong.  
No sight of man, nor sight of life, no stroke,  
No voice the somnolence and silence broke.

Then I who rowed leant on my oar, whose drip  
Fell without sparkle, and I rowed no more;  
And he that steered moved neither hand nor lip,  
But turned his wondering eye from shore to shore;  
And our trim boat let her swift motion die,  
Between the dim reflections floating by.

Awake, my heart, to be loved, awake, awake!  
 The darkness silvers away, the morn doth break,  
 It leaps in the sky: unrisen lustres slake  
 The o'ertaken moon. Awake, O heart, awake!

She too that loveth awaketh and hopes for thee;  
 Her eyes already have sped the shades that flee,  
 Already they watch the path thy feet shall take:  
 Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake, awake!

And if thou tarry from her,—if this could be,—  
 She cometh herself, O heart, to be loved, to thee;  
 For thee would unashamed herself forsake:  
 Awake to be loved, my heart, awake, awake!

Awake, the land is scattered with light, and see,  
 Uncanopied sleep is flying from field and tree:  
 And blossoming boughs of April in laughter shake;  
 Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake, awake!

Lo all things wake and tarry and look for thee:  
 She looketh and saith, 'O sun, now bring him to me.  
 Come more adored, O adored, for his coming's sake,  
 And awake my heart to be loved: awake, awake!'

## LAST WEEK OF FEBRUARY, 1890

Hark to the merry birds, hark how they sing!  
 Although 'tis not yet spring  
 And keen the air;  
 Hale Winter, half resigning ere he go,  
 Doth to his heiress show  
 His kingdom fair.

In patient russet is his forest spread,  
 All bright with bramble red,  
 With beechen moss  
 And holly sheen: the oak silver and stark  
 Sunneth his aged bark  
 And wrinkled boss.

But neath the ruin of the withered brake  
 Primroses now awake  
 From nursing shades:  
 The crumpled carpet of the dry leaves brown  
 Avails not to keep down  
 The hyacinth blades.

The hazel hath put forth his tassels ruffed;  
 The willow's flossy tuft  
 Hath slipped him free:

The rose amid her ransacked orange hips  
Braggeth the tender tips  
Of bowers to be.

A black rook stirs the branches here and there,  
Foraging to repair  
His broken home:  
And hark, on the ash-boughs! Never thrush did sing  
Louder in praise of spring,  
When spring is come.

## 16

APRIL, 1885

Wanton with long delay the gay spring leaping cometh;  
The blackthorn starreth now his bough on the eve of

May:

All day in the sweet box-tree the bee for pleasure hum-  
meth:

The cuckoo sends afloat his note on the air all day.

Now dewy nights again and rain in gentle shower  
At root of tree and flower have quenched the winter's  
drouth:

On high the hot sun smiles, and banks of cloud uptower  
In bulging heads that crowd for miles the dazzling south.

Angel spirits of sleep,  
 White-robed, with silver hair;  
 In your meadows fair,  
 Where the willows weep,  
 And the sad moonbeam  
 On the gliding stream  
 Writes her scattered dream:

Angel spirits of sleep,  
 Dancing to the weir  
 In the hollow roar  
 Of its waters deep;  
 Know ye how men say  
 That ye haunt no more  
 Isle and grassy shore  
 With your moonlit play;  
 That ye dance not here,  
 White-robed spirits of sleep,  
 All the summer night  
 Threading dances light?

The storm is over, the land hushes to rest:  
 The tyrannous wind, its strength fordone,  
 Is fallen back in the west  
 To couch with the sinking sun.  
 The last clouds fare  
 With fainting speed, and their thin streamers fly  
 In melting drifts of the sky.  
 Already the birds in the air  
 Appear again; the rooks return to their haunt,  
 And one by one,  
 Proclaiming aloud their care,  
 Renew their peaceful chant.

Torn and shattered the trees their branches again reset,  
 They trim afresh the fair  
 Few green and golden leaves withheld from the storm,  
 And awhile will be handsome yet.  
 To-morrow's sun shall caress  
 Their remnant of loveliness:  
 In quiet days for a time  
 Sad Autumn lingering warm  
 Shall humour their faded prime.

But ah! the leaves of summer that lie on the ground!  
 What havoc! The laughing timbrels of June,  
 That curtained the birds' cradles, and screened their  
 song,

That sheltered the cooing doves at noon,  
Of airy fans the delicate throng,—  
Torn and scattered around:  
Far out afield they lie,  
In the watery furrows die,  
In grassy pools of the flood they sink and drown,  
Green-golden, orange, vermillion, golden and brown,  
The high year's flaunting crown  
Shattered and trampled down.

The day is done: the tired land looks for night:  
She prays to the night to keep  
In peace her nerves of delight:  
While silver mist upstealeth silently,  
And the broad cloud-driving moon in the clear sky  
Lifts o'er the firs her shining shield,  
And in her tranquil light  
Sleep falls on forest and field.  
Sée! sléep hath fallen: the trees are asleep:  
The night is come. The land is wrapt in sleep.



## THE GARDEN IN SEPTEMBER

Now thin mists temper the slow-ripening beams  
Of the September sun: his golden gleams  
On gaudy flowers shine, that prank the rows  
Of high-grown hollyhocks, and all tall shows  
That Autumn flaunteth in his bushy bowers;  
Where tomtits, hanging from the drooping heads  
Of giant sunflowers, peck the nutty seeds;  
And in the feathery aster bees on wing  
Seize and set free the honied flowers,  
Till thousand stars leap with their visiting:  
While ever across the path mazily flit,  
Unpiloted in the sun,  
The dreamy butterflies  
With dazzling colours powdered and soft glooms,  
White, black and crimson stripes, and peacock eyes,  
Or on chance flowers sit,  
With idle effort plundering one by one  
The nectaries of deepest-throated blooms.

With gentle flaws the western breeze  
Into the garden saileth,  
Scarce here and there stirring the single trees,  
For his sharpness he vailleth:  
So long a comrade of the bearded corn,  
Now from the stubbles whence the shocks are borne,

O'er dewy lawns he turns to stray,  
As mindful of the kisses and soft play  
Wherewith he enamoured the light-hearted May,  
Ere he deserted her;  
Lover of fragrance, and too late repents;  
Nor more of heavy hyacinth now may drink,  
Nor spicy pink,  
Nor summer's rose, nor garnered lavender,  
But the few lingering scents  
Of streakèd pea, and gillyflower, and stocks  
Of courtly purple, and aromatic phlox.

And at all times to hear are drowsy tones  
Of dizzy flies, and humming drones,  
With sudden flap of pigeon wings in the sky,  
Or the wild cry  
Of thirsty rooks, that scour ascare  
The distant blue, to watering as they fare  
With creaking pinions, or—on business bent,  
If aught their ancient polity displease,—  
Come gathering to their colony, and there  
Settling in ragged parliament,  
Some stormy council hold in the high trees.

So sweet love seemed that April morn,  
When first we kissed beside the thorn,  
So strangely sweet, it was not strange  
We thought that love could never change.

But I can tell—let truth be told—  
That love will change in growing old;  
Though day by day is nought to see,  
So delicate his motions be.

And in the end 'twill come to pass  
Quite to forget what once he was,  
Nor even in fancy to recall  
The pleasure that was all in all.

His little spring, that sweet we found,  
So deep in summer floods is drowned,  
I wonder, bathed in joy complete,  
How love so young could be so sweet.

## 21

### ASIAN BIRDS

In this May-month, by grace  
of heaven, things shoot apace.  
The waiting multitude  
of fair boughs in the wood,  
How few days have arrayed  
their beauty in green shade.

What have I seen or heard?  
it was the yellow bird  
Sang in the tree: he flew  
a flame against the blue;  
Upward he flashed. Again,  
hark! 'tis his heavenly strain.

Another! Hush! Behold,  
many, like boats of gold,  
From waving branch to branch  
their airy bodies launch.  
What music is like this,  
where each note is a kiss?

The golden willows lift  
their boughs the sun to sift:  
Their sprays they droop to screen  
the sky with veils of green,  
A floating cage of song,  
where feathered lovers throng.

How the delicious notes  
    come bubbling from their throats!  
Full and sweet how they are shed  
    like round pearls from a thread!  
The motions of their flight  
    are wishes of delight.

Hearing their song I trace  
    the secret of their grace.  
Ah, could I this fair time  
    so fashion into rhyme,  
The poem that I sing  
    would be the voice of spring.

## A ROBIN

Flame-throated robin on the topmost bough

Of the leafless oak, what singest thou?

Hark! he telleth how—

‘Spring is coming now; Spring is coming now.

Now ruddy are the elm-tops against the blue sky,

The pale larch donneth her jewelry;

Red fir and black fir sigh,

And I am lamenting the year gone by.

The bushes where I nested are all cut down,

They are felling the tall trees one by one,

And my mate is dead and gone,

In the winter she died and left me lone.

She lay in the thicket where I fear to go;

For when the March-winds after the snow

The leaves away did blow,

She was not there, and my heart is woe:

And sad is my song, when I begin to sing,

As I sit in the sunshine this merry spring:

Like a withered leaf I cling

To the white oak-bough, while the wood doth ring.

Spring is coming now, the sun again is gay;

Each day like a last spring’s happy day.’—

Thus sang he; then from his spray

He saw me listening and flew away.

## NORTH WIND IN OCTOBER

In the golden glade the chestnuts are fallen all;  
From the sered boughs of the oak the acorns fall:  
The beech scatters her ruddy fire;  
The lime hath stripped to the cold,  
And standeth naked above her yellow attire:  
The larch thinneth her spire  
To lay the ways of the wood with cloth of gold.

Out of the golden-green and white  
Of the brake the fir-trees stand upright  
In the forest of flame, and wave aloft  
To the blue of heaven their blue-green tuftings soft.

But swiftly in shuddering gloom the splendours fail,  
As the harrying North-wind beareth  
A cloud of skirmishing hail  
The grievèd woodland to smite:  
In a hurricane through the trees he teareth,  
Raking the boughs and the leaves rending,  
And whistleth to the descending  
Blows of his icy flail.  
Gold and snow he mixeth in spite,  
And whirlleth afar; as away on his winnowing flight  
He passeth, and all again for awhile is bright.

## NOVEMBER

The lonely season in lonely lands, when fled  
Are half the birds, and mists lie low, and the sun  
Is rarely seen, nor strayeth far from his bed;  
The short days pass unwelcomed one by one.

Out by the ricks the mantled engine stands  
Crestfallen, deserted,—for now all hands  
Are told to the plough,—and ere it is dawn appear  
The teams following and crossing far and near,  
As hour by hour they broaden the brown bands  
Of the striped fields; and behind them firk and prance  
The heavy rooks, and daws grey-pated dance:  
As awhile, surmounting a crest, in sharp outline  
(A miniature of toil, a gem's design,)  
They are pictured, horses and men, or now near by  
Above the lane they shout lifting the share,  
By the trim hedgerow bloom'd with purple air;  
Where, under the thorns, dead leaves in huddle lie  
Packed by the gales of Autumn, and in and out  
The small wrens glide  
With a happy note of cheer,  
And yellow amoretts flutter above and about,  
Ga, familiar in fear.



And now, if the night shall be cold, across the sky  
Linnets and twites, in small flocks helter-skelter,  
All the afternoon to the gardens fly,  
From thistle-pastures hurrying to gain the shelter  
Of American rhododendron or cherry-laurel:  
And here and there, near chilly setting of sun,  
In an isolated tree a congregation  
Of starlings chatter and chide,  
Thickset as summer leaves, in garrulous quarrel:  
Suddenly they hush as one,—  
The tree top springs,—  
And off, with a whirr of wings,  
They fly by the score  
To the holly-thicket, and there with myriads more  
Dispute for the roosts; and from the unseen nation  
A babel of tongues, like running water unceasing,  
Makes live the wood, the flocking cries increasing  
Wrangling discordantly, incessantly,  
While falls the night on them self-occupied;  
The long dark night, that lengthens slow,  
Deepening with Winter to starve grass and tree,  
And soon to bury in snow  
The Earth, that, sleeping 'neath her frozen stole,  
Shall dream a dream crept from the sunless pole  
Of how her end shall be.

## THE IDLE FLOWERS

I have sown upon the fields  
Eyebright and Pimpernel,  
And Pansy and Poppy-seed  
Ripen'd and scatter'd well,

And silver Lady-smock  
The meads with light to fill,  
Cowslip and Buttercup,  
Daisy and Daffodil;

King-cup and Fleur-de-lys  
Upon the marsh to meet  
With Comfrey, Watermint,  
Loose-strife and Meadowsweet;

And all along the stream  
My care hath not forgot  
Crowfoot's white galaxy  
And love's Forget-me-not:

And where high grasses wave  
Shall great Moon-daisies blink,  
With Rattle and Sorrel sharp  
And Robin's ragged pink.

Thick on the woodland floor  
Gay company shall be,  
Primrose and Hyacinth  
And frail Anemone,

Perennial Strawberry-bloom,  
Woodsorrel's pencilled veil,  
Dishevel'd Willow-weed  
And Orchis purple and pale,

Bugle, that blushes blue,  
And Woodruff's snowy gem,  
Proud Foxglove's finger-bells  
And Spurge with milky stem.

High on the downs so bare,  
Where thou dost love to climb,  
Pink Thrift and Milkwort are,  
Lotus and scented Thyme;

And in the shady lanes  
Bold Arum's hood of green,  
Herb Robert, Violet,  
Starwort and Celandine:

And by the dusty road  
Bedstraw and Mullein tall,  
With red Valerian  
And Toadflax on the wall,

Yarrow and Chicory,  
That hath for hue no like,  
Silene and Mallow mild  
And Agrimony's spike,

Blue-eyed Veronicas  
And grey-faced Scabious  
And downy Silverweed  
And striped Convolvulus:

Harebell shall haunt the banks,  
And thro' the hedgerow peer  
Withwind and Snapdragon  
And Nightshade's flower of fear.

And where men never sow,  
Have I my Thistles set,  
Ragwort and stiff Wormwood  
And straggling Mignonette,

Bugloss and Burdock rank  
And prickly Teasel high,  
With Umbels yellow and white,  
That come to kexes dry.

Pale Chlora shalt thou find,  
Sun-loving Centaury,  
Cranesbill and Sinjunwort,  
Cinquefoil and Betony:

Shock-headed Dandelion,  
That drank the fire of the sun:  
Hawkweed and Marigold,  
Cornflower and Campion.

Let Oak and Ash grow strong,  
Let Beech her branches spread;  
Let Grass and Barley throng  
And waving Wheat for bread;

Be share and sickle bright  
To labour at all hours;  
For thee and thy delight  
I have made the idle flowers.

But now 'tis Winter, child,  
And bitter northwinds blow,  
The ways are wet and wild,  
The land is laid in snow.

## NOEL: CHRISTMAS EVE, 1913

*Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.*

A frosty Christmas Eve  
     when the stars were shining  
 Fared I forth alone  
     where westward falls the hill,  
 And from many a village  
     in the water'd valley  
 Distant music reach'd me  
     peals of bells aringing:  
 The constellated sounds  
     ran sprinkling on earth's floor  
 As the dark vault above  
     with stars was spangled o'er.

Then sped my thoughts to keep  
     that first Christmas of all  
 When the shepherds watching  
     by their folds ere the dawn  
 Heard music in the fields  
     and marveling could not tell  
 Whether it were angels  
     or the bright stars singing.

Now blessed be the tow'rs  
     that crown England so fair

That stand up strong in prayer  
unto God for our souls:  
Blessed be their founders  
(said I) an' our country folk  
Who are ringing for Christ  
in the belfries to-night  
With arms lifted to clutch  
the rattling ropes that race  
Into the dark above  
and the mad romping din.

But to me heard afar  
it was starry music  
Angels' song, comforting  
as the comfort of Christ  
When he spake tenderly  
to his sorrowful flock:  
The old words came to me  
by the riches of time  
Mellow'd and transfigured  
as I stood on the hill  
Heark'ning in the aspect  
of th' eternal silence.

## FLYCATCHERS

Sweet pretty fledgelings, perched on the rail arow,  
 Expectantly happy, where ye can watch below  
 Your parents a-hunting i' the meadow grasses  
 All the gay morning to feed you with flies;

Ye recall me a time sixty summers ago,  
 When, a young chubby chap, I sat just so  
 With others on a school-form rank'd in a row,  
 Not less eager and hungry than you, I trow,  
 With intelligences agape and eyes aglow,  
 While an authoritative old wise-acre  
 Stood over us and from a desk fed us with flies.

Dead flies—such as litter the library south-window,  
 That buzzed at the panes until they fell stiff-baked on  
     the sill,  
 Or are roll'd up asleep i' the blinds at sunrise,  
 Or wafer'd flat in a shrunken folio.

A dry biped he was, nurtured likewise  
 On skins and skeletons, stale from top to toe  
 With all manner of rubbish and all manner of lies.



## THE WEST FRONT

AN ENGLISH MOTHER, ON LOOKING INTO  
MASEFIELD'S 'OLD FRONT LINE'

No country know I so well  
as this landscape of hell.  
Why bring you to my pain  
these shadow's effigys  
Of barb'd wire, riven trees,  
the corpse-strewn blasted plain?

And the names—Hebuterne  
Bethune and La Bassée—  
I have nothing to learn—  
Contalmaison, Boisselle,  
And one where night and day  
my heart would pray and dwell;

A desert sanctuary,  
where in holy vigil  
Year-long I have held my faith  
against th' imaginings  
Of horror and agony  
in an ordeal above

The tears of suffering  
and took aid of angels

This was the temple of God:  
no mortuary of kings  
Ever gathered the spoils  
of such chivalry and love:

No pilgrim shrine soe'er  
hath assembled such prayer—  
With rich incense-wafted  
ritual and requiem  
Not beauteous batter'd Rheims  
nor lorn Jerusalem.

## CHEDDAR PINKS

Mid the squander'd colour  
    idling as I lay  
Reading the Odyssey  
    in my rock-garden  
I espied the cluster'd  
    tufts of Cheddar pinks  
Burgeoning with promise  
    of their scented bloom  
All the modish motley  
    of their bloom to-be  
Thrust up in narrow buds  
    on the slender stalks  
Thronging springing urgent  
    hasting (so I thought)  
As if they feared to be  
    too late for summer—  
Like schoolgirls overslept  
    waken'd by the bell  
Leaping from bed to don  
    their muslin dresses  
    On a May morning:

Then felt I like to one  
    indulging in sin

(Whereto Nature is oft  
a blind accomplice)  
Because my aged bones  
so enjoyed the sun  
There as I lay along  
idling with my thoughts  
Reading an old poet  
while the busy world  
Toil'd moil'd fuss'd and scurried  
worried bought and sold  
Plotted stole and quarrel'd  
fought and God knows what.  
I had forgotten Homer  
dallying with my thoughts  
Till I fell to making  
these little verses  
Communing with the flowers  
in my rock-garden  
On a May morning.

## KATE'S MOTHER

Perch'd on the upland wheatfields beyond the village end  
a red-brick Windmill stood with black bonnet of wood  
that trimm'd the whirling cross of its great arms around  
upon the wind, pumping up water night and day  
from the deep Kentish chalk to feed a little town  
where miniaturesd afar it huddled on the coast  
its glistening roofs and thrust its short pier in the sea.

Erewhile beside the Mill I had often come and gazed  
across the golden cornland to the purple main  
and distant town, so distant that I could not hear  
the barrack bugles but might spy the castle-flag  
a speck of hunting held against the foam-fleck'd waves:  
and luggers in black rank on the high shingle-bank  
drawn up beside the tarr'd huts of the fishermen  
(those channel boatmen famous for courage and skill)  
and ships that in the offing their scatter'd courses fetch'd  
with sunlit sails, or bare-masted outrode the tide:  
'Twas such a scene of bright perspective and brave hues  
as no painter can forge, brushing his greys and blues,  
his madder, vermilion, chrome and ultramarine,  
'Twas very England herself as I grew to love her  
—as any manchild loveth looking on beauty—  
England in the peace and delight of her glory,  
beneath the summer sun in the wild-roving wind  
the mighty fans hurtling steadily above me as there  
Nature flooded my heart in unseizable dream:

Long ago—when as yet the house where I was born  
was the only home I knew and I no bigger then  
than a mastiff-dog may be, and little of clothing wore  
but shirt and trews and shoes and holland pinafore:  
then was my father's garden a fairy realm of tree-  
worship, mimic warfare and ritual savagery  
and past its gates a land of peril and venture lay  
my field of romance the steep beach of the wild sea  
whither might I go wander on high-days for long hours,  
tended at every step by a saint, a nurse and mate  
of such loving devotion patience and full trust  
that of all Catharines she hath been my only Kate.

But inland past the Windmill lay a country unknown,  
so that upon the day when I was grown so strong  
(to my great pride 'twas told) that I might walk with

Kate

on her half-holiday's accustomed pilgrimage  
to see her old mother who lived across the downs  
in the next combe, it happ'd that I so stirred must be  
that after seventy years I can revive the day.

A blazing afternoon in splendor of mid-July  
Kate and my elder sister and I trudged down the street  
past village pond and church, and up the winding lane  
came out beside the windmill on the high cornland  
where my new world began. A wheel-worn sunken track  
parted the tilth, deep rugged ruts patch'd here and there  
with broken flints raked in from strewage of the ground,  
baked clay fissured by drought, as splinter'd rock unkind  
to a child's tread, and on either hand the full-grown corn

rose up a wall above me, where no breeze might come  
nor any more sight thence of the undulating sweep  
of the yellow acres nor of the blue main below.

For difficulty and roughness and scorch of the way  
then a great Bible-thought came on me: I was going  
like the Israelites of old in the desert of Sin,  
where forty years long they journey'd in punishment:  
'twas such a treeless plain as this whereon they went,  
this torrid afternoon under the fiery sun

might be the forty years; but I forgot them soon  
picking my way to run on the low skirting banks  
that shelved the fields, anon foraging mid the ranks  
fending the spikey awns off from my cheeks and eyes  
wherever I might espy the larger flowers, and pull'd  
blue Cockle and scarlet Poppy and yellow Marigold  
whose idle blazonry persists to decorate  
the mantle of green and gold which man toileth to

weave

for his old grandmother Earth:—with such posies in  
hand

we ran bragging to Kate who plodded on the track  
and now with skilful words beguiled us in her train  
warning how far off yet the promised land, and how  
journey so great required our full strength husbanded  
for the return: 'twere wise to-day to prove our strength  
and walk like men. Whereat we wished most to be wise  
and keeping near beside her heeded closely our steps  
so that our thoughts now wander'd no more from the

way

(O how interminable to me seem'd that way!)  
till it fell sloping downwards and we saw the green  
of great elms that uplifted their heads in the combe  
when for joy of the shade racing ahead we sat  
till Kate again came up with us and led us on  
by shelter'd nooks where among apple and cherry trees  
many a straw-thatcht cottage nestled back from the  
road.

A warp'd wicket hidden in a flowery Privet-hedge  
admitted to her mother's along a pebbled path  
between two little squares of crowded garden framed  
in high clipt Box, that blent its faint pervading scent  
with fragrant Black-currant, gay Sweet-william and Mint,  
and white Jasmin that hung drooping over the door.  
A bobbin sprang the latch and following Kate we stood  
in shade of a low room with one small window, and there  
facing the meagre light of its lace-curtain'd panes  
a bland silver-hair'd dame clad in a cotton frock  
sat in a rocking-chair by an open hearth, whereon  
a few wood embers smouldering kept a kettle at steam.  
She did not rise, but speaking with soft courtesy  
and full respectful pride of her daughter's charges  
gave us kind welcome, bade us sit and be rested  
while Kate prepared the tea. Many strange things the  
while

allured me: a lofty clock with loud insistent tick  
beguiled the solemn moments as it doled them out  
picturing upon its face a full-rigg'd ship that rocked  
tossing behind an unmoved billow to and fro:



beside it a huge batter'd copper warming-pan  
with burnish'd bowl fit for Goliath's giant spoon,  
and crockery whimsies ranged on the high mantel-shelf;  
'twas a storeroom of wonders, but my eyes returned  
still to the old dame, she was the greatest wonder of all  
the wrinkles innumerable of her sallow skin  
her thin voice and the trembling of her patient face  
as there she swayed incessantly on her rocking-chair  
like the ship in the clock: she had sprung into my ken  
wholly to enthrall me, a fresh nucleus of life-surprise  
such as I knew must hold mystery and could reveal:  
for I had observed strange movement of her cotton skirt  
and as she sat with one knee across the other, I saw  
how her right foot in the air was all a-tremble and jerked  
in little restless kicks: so when we sat to feast  
about the table spredd with tea and cottage cakes  
whenever her eye was off me I watched her furtively  
to make myself assured of all the manner and truth  
of this new thing, and ere we were sent out to play  
(that so Kate might awhile chat with her mother alone)  
I knew the SHAKING PALSY. What follow'd is lost,  
how I chew'd mint-leaves waiting there in the garden  
is my latest remembrance of that July day,  
all after is blank, the time like a yesterday's loaf  
is sliced as with a knife, or like as where the sea  
in some diluvian rage swallowing a part of the earth  
left a sheer cliff where erst the unbroken heights ran on,  
and by the rupture has built a landmark seen afar  
—as 'tis at the South Foreland or St. Margaret's bay—

so memory being broken may stand out more clearly  
as that day's happenings live so freshly by me, and most  
the old widow with her great courtesy and affliction:  
and I love to remember it was to her I made  
the first visit of compliment that ever I paid.

## LOW BAROMETER

The south-wind strengthens to a gale,  
Across the moon the clouds fly fast,  
The house is smitten as with a flail,  
The chimney shudders to the blast.

On such a night, when Air has loosed  
Its guardian grasp on blood and brain,  
Old terrors then of god or ghost  
Creep from their caves to life again;

And Reason kens he herits in  
A haunted house. Tenants unknown  
Assert their squalid lease of sin  
With earlier title than his own.

Unbodied presences, the pack'd  
Pollution and remorse of Time,  
Slipp'd from oblivion reenact  
The horrors of unhouseld crime.

Some men would quell the thing with prayer  
Whose sightless footsteps pad the floor,  
Whose fearful trespass mounts the stair  
Or bursts the lock's forbidden door.

Some have seen corpses long interr'd  
Escape from hallowing control,  
Pale charnel forms—nay ev'n have heard  
The shrilling of a troubled soul,

That wanders till the dawn hath cross'd  
The dolorous dark, or Earth hath wound  
Closer her storm-spredd cloke, and thrust  
The baleful phantoms underground.

## THE WIDOW

Whenever I pass that house  
my heart is in prayer  
for reverence of the angels  
who are watching there;  
where a widow reareth  
the child that she bore  
after her young lover  
was kill'd in the war.

A bird torn by the hawk  
hath pangs bodily  
and a birth of wonder  
in its agony:  
'Tis man's Gethsemane  
to know his soul riven  
and feel the bleeding roots  
being torn out from heaven.

God speed thee with comfort,  
thou sorrowing one,  
may God give thee great joy  
and pride in thy son!  
Thy hope's haunted ruin  
is not to rebuild:  
How shall the broken cup  
with wine be refill'd?

Keep thou bravely for him  
thought of thy morrow,  
and thy beauty for grace  
of thy life's sorrow,  
like a wreathing rainbow  
over thy way thrown,  
sanctifying thy presence  
while thou walkest alone.

1921.